

Stages of Acquiring Knowledge

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Stages of acquiring knowledge

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STAGES OF ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE

By Faqeehul Ummah, Mufti e A'zam, Hadhrat Mufti Mahmood Hassan Saheb Gangohi (Rahimahullah)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله نحمده و نستعينه ونستغفره ونؤمن به ونتوكل عليه ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا ومن سيأت أعمالنا من يهده الله فلا مضل له ومن يضلله فلا هادى له ونشهد أن لا اله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له ونشهد أن سيدنا ونبينا ومولانا محمداً عبده ورسوله أرسله بالحق بشيرا ونذيرا من يطع الله ورسوله فقد رشد ومن يعص الله ورسوله فانه لا يضر إلا نفسه ولا يضر الله شيئا — أعوذ بالله من الشيطن الرجيم : وقل رب زدين علما.

Allah sa had ordered Nabi sa to make this Du'aa:

Despite being granted the great rank of *Nubuwwat* and appointed as leader of all the *Ambiyaa*, yet *Nabi* so was ordered to make *Du'aa* for an increase in knowledge. Knowledge is a *Noor* (light) through which one identifies truth from falsehood. Ignorance, on the other hand, is darkness, which conceals the hazards of this path. Thus, we must acquire '*Ilm* (knowledge) to safeguard ourselves.

Hadhrat Sufyaan Thawri رحمة الله عليه has outlined five stages to acquire knowledge.

First stage is *Istimaa*' (listening attentively)

When Wahi (revelation) would descend upon Nabi , he would listen to the revelation attentively observing total concentration. The Qur-aan has recorded two orders of Istimaa. The first order is:

then pay careful attention to its recitation."

The second order is:

"Listen attentively to what is being revealed".

Paying special attention is imperative. If there is no *Istimaa*` then there is no guarantee that the '*Ilm* acquired is that of '*Ilm e Nubuwwat*. (Knowledge of *Nabi* *)

The angel Jibraeel ها descended with Wahi (revelation) to Nabi ها. After listening to it, he would relate it to the Sahaabah ها. Allah ها, in describing the qualities of Nabi ها عَلَيْهِمْ آياتِهِ

"He will recite to them the verses of the Qur'aan."

The *Sahaabah* & listened to the recitation of *Nabi* & with utmost devotion and concentration.

Once, whilst speaking to a *Sahaabi* , *Nabi* grasped his shoulder and shook it. Why did *Nabi* shake this *Sahaabi*? To ensure that he was not inattentive and paid careful attention to the words of *Nabi*.

Sahaabah slistened to Nabi swith complete attention. In turn, the Taabi'een heard from the Sahaabah sand this sequence of narration has continued, in this manner, over the centuries until 'Ilm e Nubuwwat has reached us today.

Knowledge acquired without observing *Istimaa* cannot be regarded as '*Ilm e Nubuwwat*. '*Ilm e Nubuwwat* is that knowledge which has been attained through *Istimaa*. Therefore, the *Muhadditheen* have placed great importance on *Istimaa*.

Second stage is *Insaat* (silence, pondering)

Insaat refers to paying attention, pondering or being observant. Not to have a wandering mind. This means, if a student listened to the lesson inattentively, he will not grasp the intended meaning. Subsequently, there can be no guarantee that he has understood the lesson correctly. Distortions that are apparent, nowadays, are a result of not practicing upon *Insaat* (not paying attention or pondering over what is being said or having a wandering mind).

It has been recorded regarding a certain *Muhaddith*, that someone owned a strip of land close to his well but he would not grant that farmer permission to draw water from it. They were always arguing and quarrelling over this matter.

This *Muhaddith* had the quality of *Istimaa* but he did not possess the quality of *Insaat*.

Someone asked him: "Why are you quarrelling so much? Everybody has the right to draw water from the well".

He replied, "It appears in the *Hadith*: لاَ يَسْقِى ْ أَحَدُّكُمْ مَاءَهُ زَرْعَ غَيْرِهِ No person should use his water to irrigate the land of another."

This does appear in the *Hadith*. He had acquired *Istimaa* but he did not possess *Insaat*. He did not fully understand the *Hadith* and he did not pay attention to its explanation.

This person then explained. "This is not the explanation of the *Hadith*. The correct explanation of this *Hadith* is, that one who has purchased a pregnant slave girl should not share the bed with her until she does not give birth to her child. The reason being, that it is the land of someone else. Therefore, one should not irrigate it."

On hearing the explanation the *Muhaddith* said: "May Allah ** reward you. Up to now I had understood the *Hadith* incorrectly". It is recorded regarding yet another *Muhaddith* that he used to perform *Witr Salaah* whenever he relieved himself from the call of

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nature, be it during the day or at night. When asked why he did this, he replied: "It is reported in the *Hadith* مَنِ اسْتَجْمَرَ فَلْيُوتِرْ - Whosoever relieves himself should perform *Witr*."

The questioner told him: "This is not the actual meaning of the *Hadith*". He then explained the *Hadith* to him, "Use uneven clots of soil to clean yourself after answering the call of nature". ('Witr' means 'odd' and does not refer to the 'Witr Salaah')

In short, Istimaa must be followed by Insaat.

Third stage is *Hifz* (remembering or memorizing)

One should remember whatever one has read, heard or understood. If the information leaves the mind then how will one be able to practice upon it and how will the chain of narration, for that part of knowledge, continue? What then will remain of '*Ilm* if one heard the lesson, paid attention but did not remember it?

Fourth stage is 'Amal (practice)

One should practice on whatever one has heard attentively and remembered. If one does not practice on the '*Ilm* acquired, it will be void of any benefit and blessing.

An Urdu poem translates as follows:

"The world will never listen to the statement of the one who does not put his own advice into practice."

Fifth stage is *Nashr* (preaching and imparting)

'Ilm cannot be transferred or protected without Nashr. It will remain in the confines of a closet or trunk and after a few days, it will be buried. However, embarking on preaching, without acquiring the first four stages, is of no significance.

This is why *Hadhrat* Sufyaan Thawri رحمة الله عليه clearly explained the five stages of knowledge so that all the stages may be adhered to.

CATAGORIES OF 'ILM

'Ilm is divided into two categories:

- a. 'Ilm e Naafi' Beneficial knowledge
- b. 'Ilm e Ghair Naafi' Non-beneficial knowledge.

Nabi ﷺ had made Du'aa for 'Ilm e Naafi': اَللَّهُمَّ إِنِّيْ أَسْأَلُكَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا ''Oh Allah! I ask you for beneficial knowledge'', and sought refuge from 'Ilm e Ghair Naafi': اللّهُمَّ إِنِّيْ أَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لاَينْفَعْ

"Oh Allah! I seek your protection from non-beneficial knowledge".

How will one acquire 'Ilm e Naafi'? There are four requirements for 'Ilm e Naafi':

1. Fahm e Saheeh (sound reasoning):- If one does not possess Fahm e Saheeh one will not acquire 'Ilm e Naafi'.

To attain Fahm e Saheeh one should be free of two qualities namely:

- a. Ghabaawat
- b. Ghawaayat

The meaning of *Ghabaawat* is foolishness / ignorance.

The meaning of *Ghawaayat* is intractable / crooked thinking / misguidance. A person's understanding and reasoning is in total contrast to that of the speaker. His understanding and reasoning is completely different. Subsequently, it is extremely difficult to explain and reason with such people.

All the deviated Muslim sects that have sprung up are as a result of either one of these two, *Ghabaawat* or *Ghawaayat*.

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Curing foolishness or ignorance is simple. One needs to explain the matter clearly and in detail to the person and he will grasp what is being said.

However, treating misguidance is extremely difficult. The more we attempt to rectify the individual's reasoning, the greater will be the errors and mistakes he will make.

Once, a group of people came to *Hadhrat Moulaana* Ashraf Ali Thaanwi *Saaheb* جمة الله عليه, and asked,

"We have entered the lottery. Will our numbers come out?" It was as if they were asking a fortune teller for a prediction!

Hadhrat Thaanwi رحمة الله عليه angrily replied, "What kind of reasoning do you possess? Who are you people?" Hadhrat then instructed his Khaadim (attendant), "Take them out (of here)."

When they heard this, they joyfully said, "Our numbers will come out. *Hadhrat* has said, 'take them out', so our numbers will come out."

Hadhrat Moulana implied one thing and they understood the complete opposite.

Thus when seeking knowledge, one needs to acquire 'Ilm e Naafi. How will we gain 'Ilm e Naafi? By attaining Fahm e Saheeh which in turn requires the removal (absence) of two qualities, Ghabaawat and Ghawaayat.

2. Yaqeen e Kaamil (total conviction):- One should have the total conviction that the 'Ilm acquired is 'Ilm e Nubuwwat. This knowledge is the absolute truth and our salvation depends solely on it. There can be no salvation in contradicting it.

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- 3. 'Azm e Qawi (firm determination): One must have the firm determination of bringing into practice the knowledge of Wahi and the knowledge of Nabi ...
- 4. *Mujaahadah e Qaahirah* (concerted effort):- A person's *Nafs* (carnal desires) and *Shaytaan* create impediments for him in this path. Therefore, one needs *Mujaahadah e Qaahirah* to crush these two oppositions.

When one inculcates these four aspects then he will receive '*Ilm e Naafi*. In this lies a great deal of benefit and blessings.

TEN GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS TO DEVELOP SINCERITY

By
Hadhrat Moulaana Ibraahim Pandor Saaheb
(Daamat Barakaatuhum)

It is an accepted fact that even the simplest of things in the world cannot be obtained without taking into consideration it's rules, regulation and etiquettes.

The people of the past had endured great struggles, sacrifices and tolerated great difficulties in acquiring *Deeni* Knowledge. They also displayed principles and etiquettes far beyond our comprehension.

Nowadays, our enthusiasm has weakened and laziness is becoming more and more universal. Subsequently, only ten guidelines and etiquettes have been selected and presented before you. There is great hope in the Mercy of Allah that by observing them, it will be of great assistance in obtaining beneficial knowledge and blessings.

These guidelines are as follows:

1. The correction of intention

One should obtain 'Ilm in order to gain a deep understanding in *Deen*. To recognize and differentiate between *Halaal* and *Haraam* so that by practicing upon it, "self-purification" and "the pleasure of Allah will be acquired". Also make the intention of propagating the true *Deen* to Allah's creation. One should remain firm on this *niyyat* throughout one's life.

2. Piety and Practicing upon the commands of Allah 38

To obtain 'Ilm, one should abstain from sins and practise on the knowledge acquired and adopt Taqwa. Try to create a strong bond (intense love) with Allah and fear for His punishment. Be punctual upon the Faraaidh and Waajibaat. Thereafter, be vigilant on the Sunnats, Nawaafil and Aadaab. Adopt the Sunnats of Rasulullah in every facet of life.

In *Ta'leemul Muta'allim* (pg. 27) a *Hadith* is narrated that a person who acquires '*Ilm* without abstaining from sins, Allah will punish him in any one of the following ways:

a. Allah swill grant him death in his youth.

b. Make him reside in such a place where no one will be able to derive benefit from his '*Ilm*

c. Involve him in the service of kings and leaders.

May Allah **save** us.

3. Abstaining from obstacles that hinder the acquisition of knowledge

a) Distance oneself from all types of sins and faults (evils), big or small especially the sins of the eyes, tongue, private parts and evil thoughts, i.e. to abstain from lustful glances, misuse of the tongue and fulfilling one's carnal desires unlawfully. Gazing at a beardless, handsome youth is extremely destructive. *Hadhrat Moulaana* Maseehullah Khan *Saaheb* رحمة الله عليه used to say:

[&]quot;Abstain from associating with young beardless lads."

- b) Abundance of association i.e. to increase one's friendship. Make true friendship with your *Kitaabs* and *Ulamaa e Haqq*.
- c) Do not marry *Hadhrat Mufti* Mahmood *Saaheb* رحمة الله عليه would advise :

"It is a famous Arabic saying that for everything there is a calamity and 'Ilm has many calamities, the first of which is marriage. For this reason our elders would abstain from marriage in their student days." (Tarbiyatut Taalibeen Page 283)

- d) Abstain from people of different ideologies and do not associate with such students who, instead of striving for 'Ilm, lead a carefree life.
- e) Avoid bad environments or environments which are not conducive to *Ilm*.
- f) Avoid consuming doubtful and *Haraam* food. Do not over eat. Eat *Halaal* nourishing food and inculcate good eating habits. Cut down on meat in your diet. *Hadhrat Mufti Saheb* رحمة الله عليه used to say :
 - "Eat so much that the food will carry you along. Don't eat so much that you have to carry the food along. Little *Halaal* is better than plenty of *Haraam*."
- g) Do not become occupied in unnecessary and useless activities, especially during the holidays and free time. Keep *Deeni Kitaabs* as your companion. Don't pass your time in idle thoughts, reading sport, fashion magazines and novels. Refrain from watching T.V., videos, DVD's, going to the cinema, listening to music, etc. Value time and adopt time management. The harms caused by the misuse of cell phones are

overwhelming. Strictly avoid viewing pictures etc. even on your cell-phones. Avoid taking photos with cell-phones too. Ponder over the reality of life shown by *Rasulullah* ... Distance yourself from quarrels, disputes and *Fitnah*. Safeguard your speech. Value your time and engage yourself completely in acquiring knowledge. Habits formed during your student days will remain with you forever, whether good or bad. Therefore inculcate *Akhlaaq e Faadhilah* i.e. patience, tolerance, gratitude, contentment, kindness, mercy, etc. and weed out *Akhlaaq e Razeelah* i.e. jealousy, hatred, pride, swearing, backbiting, stealing etc. Try to fulfil everyone's rights. Try to remember these points and keep yourself aloof from them.

4. Dedication and effort coupled with good study habits

- a) Be completely engrossed in one's *Mutaala'ah* and *Takraar*.
- b) Be punctual for your lessons and endeavour to maintain an excellent attendance record. There is a famous Arabic proverb:

"'Ilm will not give you part of it until you don't hand over your entire self to it."

c) Try to achieve an academic nature (علمي مزاح), i.e. always have a *Deeni Kitaab* with you whether travelling or during leisure moments.

5. Love your *Ustaadhs* from the inner recesses of the heart

- a) Uphold honour and respect in the presence and absence of one's tutors. Some students display great sincerity and affection in the presence of the *Ustaadh*; talking in sweet tones and straightening his shoes but in his absence they portray a different attitude. This is a very dangerous scenario.
- b) Have a true spirit for the *Khidmat* of the *Ustaadh*.

6. Respect the means / avenues of 'Ilm:

Have full regards for all the rules and regulations of the institute. Respect *Kitaabs*, desks, classrooms, *Asaatidhah*, the *Madrasah* as well as those associated to the *Madrasah*, to the extent of respecting the cook and cleaners of the *Madrasah* too. Have love and attachment for the institute and constantly make dua for the institute and *Asaatidhah*.

It is imperative to understand time management. Be punctual for lessons. Do not arrive late. There is a famous Arabic saying:

"Time is more valuable than gold."

"The time, which has passed, cannot be regained."

"These are salient aspects in obtaining 'Ilm."

7. Pay special attention to appearance and behaviour:

- a) Adopt the clothing of the pious and righteous '*Ulamaa*, at home, during holidays and at *Madrasah*.
- b) Avoid wearing clothes with writings or pictures and fashion clothing.
- c) Safeguard the *Shar'ee* limits of the beard and trim one's hair, at intervals of every one or one and a half months. If a student wishes to keep his hair in conformance to the *Sunnat* (in length), he should bear in mind, that to maintain a good crop of hair is not an easy matter. It is cumbersome and time consuming. For this reason, it is more appropriate for students to practice upon the *Sunnat* of shaving the head. This is why most elders practiced upon this *Sunnat*.

8. Constantly make *Du'aa* for acquiring '*Ilm e Naafi*:

In the *Qur-aan Shareef*, *Rasulullah* # was instructed to make *Du'aa* for an increase in '*Ilm*.

"And say, O Allah! Grant me an increase in 'Ilm."

Practicing upon this command, Rasulullah * would make these Du'aas:

"O Allah I am beseeching You for 'Ilm e Naafi" and "O Allah I seek protection from you from non beneficial 'Ilm."

9. Convey *Eesaal e Thawaab* to the authors of the *Kitaabs* you are studying:

Recite some portion of the *Qur-aan* or *Tasbeeh* and send the rewards to the author so that you will benefit spiritually and their blessed souls will also be focused towards you on condition that the author is a Muslim.

10. Develop a relationship and contact with a pious spiritual mentor:

Without the correct guidance to obtaining 'Ilm, practicing upon it and gaining perfection effortlessly is seldom achieved. It was evident that the previous spiritual mentors would not take students in to Bay'at so that their entire time could be spent in acquiring 'Ilm. These spiritual mentors would regard incantations and rituals as inappropriate for the students.

Sheikhul Islaam Hadhrat Moulaana Husain Ahmad Madani عليه would strictly practice upon this opinion. He would not take students into *Bay'at* before they have completed their studies.

However, presently, students waste their valuable time engaged in useless activities. Hence, the present spiritual mentors have made adjustment. *Hadhrat Mufti* Mahmood Hassan Gangohi رحمة الله عليه would say:

"It is better that students take *Bay'at* at the hands of a spiritual mentor and pass their time in accordance to his teachings and instructions, rather than wasting their precious time in useless activities. One's time would be spent in the prescribed rituals and *Du'aas*, thereby inculcating the desire of acquiring a spirit of true love for knowledge and to practice upon it. If, for some reason, a

relationship with a spiritual mentor is not established, one should at least be preoccupied with the *Kitaabs* and be punctual on the *Shari'ah*. *Insha-Allah*, the concern of the hereafter and a desire for one's spiritual purification will be created in this manner as well and there is hope that one's *Imaan* will be safeguarded and one will qualify to be a true inheritor of *Nubuwwat*."

(*Maktoobat Vol. 1 Page 222*)

May Allah **s** grant us *Taufeeq* to practise. *Aameen*.

Note:

- After qualifying, keep constant contact with the institute and Asaatidhah. Have the sincere desire to help the creation of Allah and think of good and beneficial ways of imparting deeni knowledge to them which will create a deeni awareness in them.
- Stay away from disputes and *Fitnah*. Keep guard over your habits, manners, speech and dealings. Be an example to others and lead a practical life in accordance to *Shari'ah*. Respect all.
- After every 40 days take a special note of your spiritual upliftment. If you find any deficiency then with the advice of your spiritual mentor try to rectify it.

THE REALITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Everybody strives for respect and believes that respect is achieved through wealth, position or status. In reality respect earned through these avenues, are temporary. When wealth decreases or is destroyed or one's position or status could be snatched away in the blink of an eyelid, the respect earned through it is also gone.

However respect earned through knowledge is permanent. Knowledge is the first opening towards righteous actions (deeds). Righteous deeds are everlasting and are the means of reaching *Jannah* and this (reaching *Jannah*) is true success. Allah declares in the Holy *Qur-aan*:

وَ لله الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُو ْلِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنيْنَ

"Respect is for Allah and his Rasul and the true believers."

VIRTUES OF KNOWLEDGE OVER WEALTH

- 1. Knowledge is the inheritance of the *Ambiyaa* , whereas wealth and status is the inheritance of Qaaroon and Fir'aun.
- 2. By gaining knowledge, there will be an increase in sincere friends. Conversely by gaining wealth, jealousy and animosity will become rampant.
- 3. Knowledge has no fear of theft whereas there is constant fear for one's wealth.
- 4. Knowledge is a light of the heart. Wherever you go it will accompany you, whereas wealth has to be kept in a safe.
- 5. Knowledge will look after you and save you from disgrace and humiliation, whereas wealth will have to be looked after.
- 6. The 'older' the knowledge, the greater will be the experience and respect earned from others. The 'older' the money, the lesser the value.
- 7. The love for knowledge makes you generous and the love for wealth makes you a miser.
- 8. The more you use knowledge the more it increases. The more you spend wealth, the decrease is greater.
- 9. Love for knowledge enlightens the heart, whereas love for wealth creates darkness in the heart.
- 10. With knowledge a person can acquire wealth but a person cannot buy knowledge with wealth.

11. The increase in wealth made Fir'aun proclaim himself to be Allah. Wealth instilled pride in him. But due to an increase in knowledge, *Rasulullah* * made the following supplication:

"We did not worship You (O Allah) as You deserved to be worshipped, and we did not recognize You as You deserve to be recognized."

Thus knowledge creates humility and humbleness.

- 12. Knowledge will make you recognize your creator. Wealth will involve you in leisure and pleasure, taking you away from your creator.
- 13. Knowledge will make you aware of the rights of others. Wealth will make you violate people's rights, ultimately making you void of the mercy of Allah.
- 14. Knowledge will give you an understanding of *Halaal* and *Haraam*, good and bad, right and wrong, whereas wealth will deprive you of this understanding.

MONEY CAN BUY A LOT OF THINGS, BUT CANNOT BUY EVERYTHING

Many people are misguided or deceived in this regard.

- 1. Money can buy a watch but not time.
- 2. Money can buy spectacles but not sight.
- 3. Money can buy books but not knowledge.
- 4. Money can buy a soft bed but not sleep and comfort.
- 5. Money can buy good clothes but not beauty and handsomeness.
- 6. Money can hire servants but not buy a pious child.
- 7. Money can buy medicine but not health.
- 8. Money can buy hair dye but not youth.
- 9. Money can buy respect (flattery) to a certain limit but not love from the heart.
- 10. Money can buy entertainment but not happiness.
- 11. Money can buy food but not satisfaction.
- 12. Money can buy medicine but not health.
- 13. Money can buy many things of the world but in the Hereafter it will be of no value.
- 14. Money can buy pleasure and leisure but not contentment.

Allah says in the Holy *Qur-aan*:

"On the day of Qiyaamah neither your goods nor your children will be of help to you, except that person who brings a sound and clear heart."

• Therefore, strive to achieve that which is real and true success. That is why we have come to the *Madrasah*. May Allah thelp us all to inculcate His love and happiness to carry out His commands according to His wishes. May Allah the make us true followers of *Rasulullah*.

• A person's primary needs are food, shelter, clothing and medication. Besides this everything else is the desire of the *Nafs*. Lastly, we humbly request the students to use their free time studying the biographies, correspondences and discourses of the elders. These biographies are a substitute for their direct company. I hope that the sincere student will endeavour to practice on these advices.

Constantly make shukar to Allah for giving you the opportunity to acquire Deeni Ilm, so that you could understand the reality of life.

Masnoon duas for acquiring beneficial knowledge

رَبِّ زدْنيْ عِلْمًا

O Allah increase me in knowledge

O Allah verily I ask You for beneficial knowledge, expansion in sustenance, and cure for every illness.

O Allah verily I seek your protection from knowledge that is not beneficial, from a heart that is inattentive, from base desires (nafs) that cannot be satiated and from duas that are not answered.

O Allah endow me with knowledge, beautify me with tolerance, honour me with *taqwa* (fear of Allah) and beautify me with *Aafiyah* (good conditions)

O Allah allow me to benefit from that which You have taught me and teach me that which will benefit me and increase me in knowledge